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NEWS RELEASE

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STATEMENT BY SENATE PRESIDENT REGARDING RECENT NEWS REPORTS

President Courtney served in many roles at Western Oregon University from 1985 to 2014. For a period of time, ending in 2001, part of his responsibilities included receiving conduct complaints.

“I always took every complaint seriously and followed the policies of the University. I routinely consulted with the Attorney General’s office on how to proceed then worked with the responsible party, usually the provost, to resolve the complaint,” said Courtney.

In 2001 Western reached a settlement with a student regarding the harassing conduct of a professor. A lawsuit was never filed. Senator Courtney was not involved in reaching the settlement.

In 2005 President Courtney was named in a lawsuit filed by a student at Western Oregon University regarding harassing conduct by a professor. The plaintiff dismissed Courtney from the lawsuit 18 days later “with prejudice” meaning that the matter was permanently dismissed. His name was dropped because he:

- had no knowledge of the incidents or the plaintiff
- was not in a position at the university to discipline professors or receive complaints
- was on leave from the university during the time period described in the lawsuit for medical leave and the legislative session.

This matter was widely reported by local media outlets at the time.

In regard to former Senator Kruse, “My office took immediate and swift action the day the conduct was reported in a caucus meeting in 2016,” said Courtney. The President took every action available to him against Kruse:

- Reported conduct in accordance with our policies, March 2016
- Held an intervention to correct the behavior, March 2016
- Reported conduct in accordance with our policies, October 2017
- Removed Kruse from all committees with formal letter, October 2017
- Launched an internal investigation- including 23 interviews, October 2017
- Held a second intervention to correct the behavior, November 2017
- Launched an independent investigation, November 2017
- Secured Kruse’s agreement to limit his presence in the Capitol during the investigation, January 2018
- Secured Kruse’s agreement to not be unaccompanied while moving throughout the building during session, January 2018
- Moved Kruse’s parking space away from Senator Gelser’s space at her request, February 2018
- After the independent investigation report was released, secured Kruse’s agreement to stay away from the Capitol entirely, February 2018
- Turned off Kruse’s entry badge into the Capitol, February 2018
- Secured Kruse’s resignation, February 2018

“The President of the Senate is not a CEO. I am limited- by the Constitution- in my ability to discipline members of the legislature. This was frustrating. Some of my actions may have went beyond my authority. This is one of the areas where improvements are needed.

“As I said the day Kruse resigned ‘The Legislative Branch is committed to providing a safe and respectful workplace that is free from harassment. Those words need to be more than just language in a policy. Each and every one of us must commit to creating a culture where harassment in any form is not tolerated. We must create a culture where victims are empowered to speak up. We must create a culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Oregon and her people expect no less from us. We should expect no less from each other.’

“It is because of this commitment Speaker Kotek and I asked the Oregon Law Commission for help. We also appointed the Joint Committee on Capitol Culture to have a full and open discussion on the changes we need to make. I look forward to the final product of the committee and implementing the changes,” said Courtney.